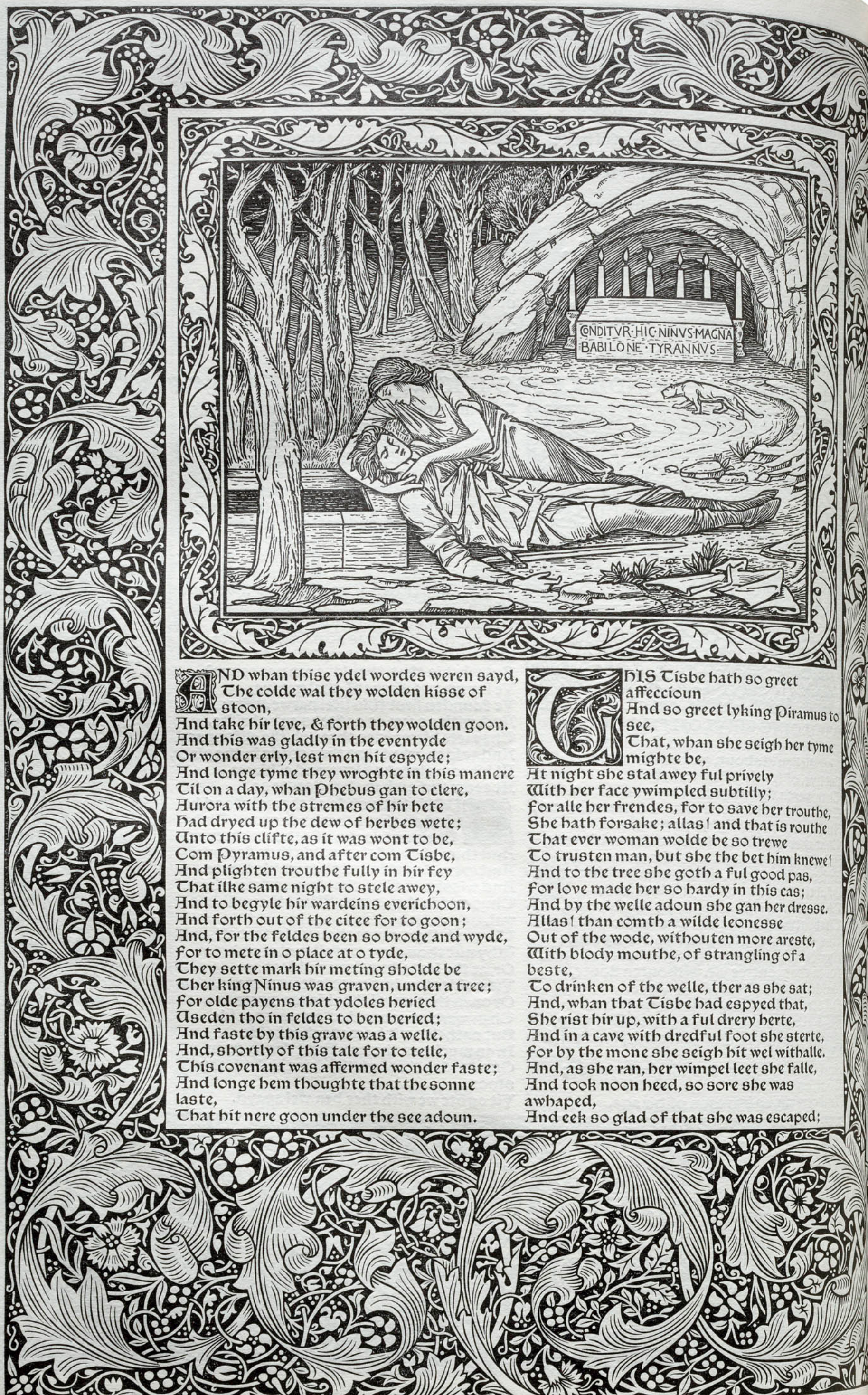




AND when thise ydel wordes weren sayd,
 The colde wal they wolden kisse of
 stoon,
 And take hir leve, & forth they wolden goon.
 And this was gladly in the eventyde
 Or wonder erly, lest men hit espyde;
 And longe tyme they wroghte in this manere
 Til on a day, whan Phebus gan to clere,
 Aurora with the streames of hir hete
 Had dried up the dew of herbes wete;
 Unto this clifte, as it was wont to be,
 Com Piramus, and after com Tisbe,
 And plighen trouthe fully in hir fey
 That ilke same night to stele away,
 And to begyle hir wardeins everichoon,
 And forth out of the citee for to goon;
 And, for the feldes been so brode and wyde,
 for to mete in o place at o tyde,
 They sette mark hir meting sholde be
 Ther king Ninus was graven, under a tree;
 for olde payens that ydoles heried
 Aseden tho in feldes to ben beried;
 And faste by this grave was a welle.
 And, shortly of this tale for to telle,
 This covenant was affermed wonder faste;
 And longe hem thoughte that the sonne
 laste,
 That hit nere goon under the see adoun.

THIS Tisbe hath so greet
 affeccoun
 And so greet tyking Piramus to
 see,
 That, whan she seigh her tyme
 mighte be,
 At night she stal away ful prively
 With her face ywimpled subtilly;
 for alle her frendes, for to save her trouthe,
 She hath forsake; alas! and that is routhe
 That ever woman wolde be so trewe
 To trusten man, but she the bet him knewe!
 And to the tree she goth a ful good pas,
 for love made her so hardy in this cas;
 And by the welle adoun she gan her dresse.
 Alas! than comth a wilde leonesse
 Out of the wode, withouten more areste,
 With bloody mouthes, of strangling of a beste,
 To drinken of the welle, ther as she sat;
 And, whan that Tisbe had espyed that,
 She rist hir up, with a ful drery herte,
 And in a cave with dredful foot she sterte,
 for by the mone she seigh hit wel withalle.
 And, as she ran, her wimpel leet she falle,
 And took noon heed, so sore she was
 awhaped,
 And eek so glad of that she was escaped;

And thus she sit, and darketh wonder stille.
 Whan that this leonesse hath dronke her fille,
 About the welle gan she for to winde,
 And right anon the wimpel gan she finde,
 And with her bloody mouth hit al torete.
 Whan this was doon, no lenger she ne stente,
 But to the wode her wey than hath she nome.
AND, at the laste, this Piramus is come,
 But al to longe, alas! at hoom was he.
 The mone shoon, men mighte wel ysee,
 And in his weye, as that he com ful faste,
 His eyen to the grounde adoun he caste,
 And in the sonde, as he beheld adoun,
 He seigh the steppes brode of a leoun,
 And in his herte he sodeinly agroos,
 And pale he wex, therwith his heer aroos,
 And neer he com, and fond the wimpel torn.
 Alas! quod he, the day that I was born!
 This o night wol us lovers bothe slee!
 How sholde I axen mercy of Tisbe
 Whan I am he that have yow slain, alas!
 My bidding bath yow slain, as in this cas.
 Alas! to bidde a woman goon by nighte
 In place ther as peril fallen mighte,
 And I so slow! alas, I ne hadde be
 Here in this place a furlong wey or ye!
 Now what leoun that be in this foreste,
 My body mote he renden, or what beste
 That wilde is, gnawen mote he now myn herte!
 And with that worde he to the wimpel sterte,
 And kiste hit ofte, and weep on hit ful sore,
 And seide: Wimpel, alas, ther nis no more
 But thou shalt fele as wel the blood of me
 As thou hast felt the bleding of Tisbe!
 And with that worde he smoot him to the
 herte.
 The blood out of the wounde as brode sterte
 As water, whan the conduit broken is.
NOW Tisbe, which that wiste nat of this,
 But sitting in her drede, she thoughte thus:
 If hit so falle that my Piramus
 Be comen hider, and may me nat yfinde,
 He may me holden fals and eek unkinde.
 And out she comth, and after him gan espyen
 Bothe with her herte and with her yen,
 And thoughte, I wol him tellen of my drede
 Bothe of the leonesse and al my dede.
 And at the laste her love than hath she founde
 Beting with his heles on the grounde,
 Al bloody, and therwithal abak she sterte,
 And lyke the waves quappe gan her herte,
 And pale as box she wex, and in a throwe
 Aysed her, and gan him wel to knowe,
 That hit was Piramus, her herte dere.
 Who coude wryte whiche a dedly chere
 hath Tisbe now, and how her heer she rente,

And how she gan herselfe to turmente,
 And how she lyth and swowneth on the grounde,
 And how she weep of teres ful his wounde,
 How medeleth she his blood with her compleynte,
 And with his blood herselfen gan she peynte;
 How clippeth she the dede cors, alas!
 How doth this woful Tisbe in this cas!
 How kisseth she his frosty mouth so cold!
 Who hath doon this, & who hath been so bold
 To sleen my leef? O speke, my Piramus!
 I am thy Tisbe, that thee calleth thus!
 And therwithal she lifteth up his heed.
 HIS woful man, that was nat fully deed,
 Whan that he herde the name of Tisbe cryen,
 On her he caste his hevy dedly yen
 And down again, and yeldeth up the gost.
TISBE rist up, withouten noise or bost,
 And seigh her wimpel and his empty
 shethe,
 And eek his swerd, that him hath doon to dethe;
 Than spak she thus: My woful hand, quod she,
 Is strong ynogh in swiche a werk to me;
 for love shal yive me strengthe and hardinesse
 To make my wounde large ynogh, I gesse.
 I wol thee folwen deed, and I wol be
 felawe and cause eek of thy deeth, quod she.
 And thogh that nothing save the deeth only
 Mighte thee fro me departe trewely,
 Thou shalt no more departe now fro me
 Than fro the deeth, for I wol go with thee!
AND now, ye wretched jelous fadres oure,
 We, that weren whylom children youre,
 We prayen yow, withouten more envye,
 That in o grave yfere we moten lye,
 Sin love hath brought us to this pitous ende!
 And rightwis God to every lover sende,
 That loveth trewely, more prosperitee
 Than ever hadde Piramus and Tisbe!
 And lat no gentil woman her assure
 To putten her in swiche an aventure.
 But God forbode but a woman can
 Been as trewe and loving as a man!
 And, for my part, I shal anon it kythe!
 And, with that worde, his swerd she took as
 swythe,
 That warm was of her loves blood and hoot,
 And to the herte she herselfen smoot.
AND thus ar Tisbe and Piramus ago.
 Of trewe men I finde but fewe mo
 In alle my bokes, save this Piramus,
 And therfor have I spoken of him thus.
 for hit is deyntee to us men to finde
 A man that can in love be trewe and kinde.
 Heer may ye seen, what lover so he be,
 A woman dar and can as wel as he.
 Explicit legenda Tesbe.

The
 Legend of
 Goode
 Wimmen